

From GEDS to PhDs



LIFETIME

Low-Income Families'
Empowerment through Education

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March 23, 2010

To: House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support

My name is Deborha Velarde; I'm a single parent of two. My daughter Alina is over eighteen and my son Stevie, who is thirteen years old, resides with me. I have been on TANF for the last five years and I'm getting ready to time off in two weeks. I'm a full time student at Chabot College in Hayward, California, working on my A.A. degree in Human Services. Due to my learning disability it has taken me a lot longer to complete all the classes that I need to finish. Because of time limits, moms like me with disabilities aren't able to complete the educations we need to get good jobs.

This month, my caseworker gave me a two-week notice that I'm about to lose everything. I don't know where this is going to lead me and my family. Except homeless, jobless and with no where to turn. I've been very depressed about all of this. I was never told by my Welfare Worker that I would be losing my job when I timed off. I don't know how they expect people to get ahead if everything we do right they take it away from us.

Last November, the welfare department sent me to LIFETIME to do unpaid work experience. Luckily, the LIFETIME staff taught me my rights, and that I should be getting paid. Otherwise I'd still be working for nothing with my time limit running out. As it is, I ended up working for free for two months, while my five-year lifetime limit was ticking down. After I requested a paid work experience position, they made me an extra 30 days to start getting paid. At no point did the welfare department help me in getting a paid job, even though they knew my time limit was running out.

I knew I would be timing off this year, but when I called my caseworker to see when I was timing off, she told me not to worry, that I still had time. So I didn't worry, because I thought my job would last through September, and it might be extended after that. Next thing I knew I received a letter this month telling me that I was losing almost everything in only two weeks. I knew that when I timed off I'd lose my share of the welfare grant and my transportation support services for my gas to and from school and work which helps a lot. But I didn't know that once I timed off TANF, I'd also be losing my job, which is funded through the TANF Emergency Contingency Fund. I pray that Congress will extend the subsidized jobs funding, so I can keep my job.

Without the stimulus job program, I will have no income and will be timing off welfare. I'm not eligible for unemployment, and will have no income other than my son's share of the CalWORKs grant of \$345.00 per month. My family will lose a total of \$1,030 every month in benefits (\$435) and

my wages (\$600+). If Congress funds the subsidized jobs at 100%, like the President proposed, my employer could afford to keep me and give me a raise, and I could earn \$1,600 per month and pay taxes. I feel lucky to have this job, with the unemployment rate in my community. Toyota/Nummi is laying off 4,800 workers at the end of this month; my ex-husband, who had 22 years on the job, will be one of them per month. Thank God California doesn't time limit kids, otherwise we'd have nothing.

I cannot even tell you what this will do to me and my family, and other low-income families, if the TANF and subsidized jobs programs are not extended. My family will end up homeless, jobless, and struggling to survive. Because of TANF/CalWORKs, I have been able to get an education and paid work experience. I really depend on this job; it has taught me to become self sufficient and has enabled me to start to get back on my feet again. If the jobs programs end, a lot of single parents, including myself, will be left with nothing and nowhere to turn. I'm asking you, from the bottom of my heart, to protect this program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deborha Velarde". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid, with a large initial 'D'.

Deborha Velarde
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